

Rome Little Theatre Case Study Analysis

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Part I: Brief History/Context of Organization

Rome Little Theatre is a community theatre located in Rome, Georgia (population City: 36,300 County: 96,250). The Rome Little Theatre Mission Statement is: The purpose of Rome Little Theatre is to present amateur theatrical productions, encourage interest in drama, and contribute to the cultural and educational life of the community. RLT is an active supporter of the arts in Rome and Floyd County.

The theatre functions as an amateur community theatre that was founded in 1933. The theatre took a hiatus during World War II but began productions again in 1956. The location of the theatre productions has moved since its beginning but remains on Broad Street in the downtown area of Rome.

RLT puts on a full theatrical season, each year complete with 8 season shows, 6 regular adult shows and 2 RLT Jr. shows for kids only. In addition to the 8 regular season shows there are sometimes additional summer stock shows. In my own experience and after talking with another very active member, we would say the theatre is unique because of its ability to have performers, volunteers and directors back again and again.

The organization employs only two full time positions, an office secretary and an executive director. All tasks are performed by these two positions, board members and/or volunteers. As you could guess, lots of volunteers are involved in every aspect of running this theatre. This organization functions under a 'working board' with every member of the board is extremely active in the theatre productions.

The building is part of what makes RLT unique. The company performs in one of Georgia's first movie theatres (Historic Desoto Theatre). There have been lots of renovations since they have started using this space, especially in the last 5 years. The space is not ideal for a theatre as there isn't much space in the wings for dressings rooms, props, etc. That being said, it is a beautiful space inside and out and they make it work. The exterior of the building has the original marquee for the old movie theatre, which adds to the charm and makes it stand out on the main street of town. The interior has recently been renovated, repainted, carpeted, new seats, new concession area, etc.

Part II: Environmental Scan

1. Economic Scan

Rome Little Theatre operating budget comes almost solely from regular season shows, including ticket sales and concession. Each show is responsible for working with sponsors, which are mostly organizations in the City of Rome. They have recently started to add small 'black box' shows between the regular season shows to help fundraise for specific projects. From what I know the RLT board and staff members do not apply for grants regularly or have much state/federal funding at all. The building they rent, the Historic Desoto Theatre, has its own board that helps raise funds for renovations and building maintenance. The theatre knows that they make the most money on children's shows and has implemented a RLT Junior series to cater to that audience.

There are a few small theatre companies in Northwest Georgia but within Rome city limits RLT is the only community theatre that produces regular shows. The other competition could come from the two colleges in the town that put on theatre performances and have theatre majors.

2. Demographic Scan

Rome Little Theatre audiences are generally made up of a wide range of ages and typically middle-class families. I don't think that the theatre has completed a survey of the types of audience members attending their shows but I think that would be a great start to building a marketing plan. They are thinking about starting a RLT Senior series of shows because they know there is a large population of seniors in the Rome area.

I can only take from my personal experience with the theatre but most of the active participants come from upper middle-class families and couples, primarily Caucasian with some higher education. Recruiting minority populations to participate in the performances has and will continue to be a challenge for this community theatre.

There are three colleges in Rome and I think that would be a great resource for the theatre that they aren't currently taking advantage of.

3. Cultural Scan

As mentioned in the organization description, the two full time staff members, working board and volunteers run all aspects of the organization. From the board members I know personally and my experience with the theatre it seems to be a very laid back environment that relies on the time of mostly volunteers.

The theatre is in a great location, downtown Rome, where most people from the city go to bars and restaurants. It helps to attract audience members to the shows and partner with other downtown businesses.

The theatre is located in the South and generally the active members and audience members tend to be more conservative and that can affect the artistic offerings. I think that RLT has pushed those boundaries and done so successfully in the past.

Rome Little Theatre has embraced technology in the years past by updating their online ticket system and by maintaining a heavy social media presence. Their website could look better and showcase the performances in a more organized way but overall they have the needed information on their website.

4. Other Environmental Elements

Part III: SWOC Analysis

Cultural Products

S- The products produced by RLT reach a broad audience: children, musicals, variety of plays, and older audiences. The quality of the productions has increased over the past few years because of more experienced directors, producers and better volunteer coordination.

W- There is limited staff and board time to devote to the production of shows. Without expanding the board responsibilities or staff positions the theatre can not expand their productions or quality of productions.

O- RLT has such an opportunity for growth with more revenue sources. If they applied for grants, foundation or government they could attract more donors or vice versa. With more of a budget they could produce more shows or create new positions.

C- The main challenge is simply what happens within a small community theatre, for the most part the same people are the actors, directors, producers, board members and volunteers. That can make it hard to have an objective view for any decision about a production to be made.

Place/Access

S- RLT performs in the Historic Desoto Theatre, which is located in downtown Rome, where most people go to hang out on the weekends or for other cultural events. Great location!

W- The theatre company is currently limited to the time available in the theatre because it is a rental space. It will be a challenge to expand their season, if they begin to grow substantially. There are general limitations to using a space that is historic and rented out for other performances/events.

O- There are opportunities for RLT to take more advantage of technology to promote access to their shows. Opportunities to partner with schools/colleges to offer students better access to performances and involvement.

C- Parking is always a challenge in a downtown location.

Promotional Efforts

S- RLT has a strong social media presence and members/actors in the theatre promote individually to their networks. Many partnerships for promotion with existing organizations in the community.

W- It is sometimes difficult to streamline promotional efforts because it is mostly completed by volunteers or people working for one specific production.

O- There are opportunities for RLT to partner more with downtown businesses for promotion opportunities. Possibly, dinner and a show ticket pricing and marking within the restaurants.

C- I believe their website is challenge and really needs to be redesigned for easier navigation and an updated look. It's always challenging in general to promote within such a small community.